



State of Connecticut

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REGULATIONS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Testimony

In Support of S.B 391 An Act Allowing Persons Who Are Sixteen And Seventeen Years Old To Work On Liquor Permit Establishment Premises.

General Law Committee
February 19, 2015

Dear Chairman Leone, Chairman Baram, Senator Witkos, Representative Carter and members of the General Law Committee

Thank you for drafting Proposed S.B. No. 391, **AN ACT ALLOWING PERSONS WHO ARE SIXTEEN AND SEVENTEEN YEARS OLD TO WORK ON LIQUOR PERMIT ESTABLISHMENT PREMISES**. I am strongly in support of this bill and find it unfortunate that the legislature even needs to draft it.

In 1982, the Connecticut legislature debated raising the drinking age from 18 to 19 years of age. As part of that debate, a concern arose on the impact of jobs and livelihoods of 18 year old individuals who owned bars, liquor stores, restaurants, or who worked as a bartender, waitress or a person who serves drinks. As a result, Connecticut passed C.G.S. 30-90a expressly permitting 18 year olds to work in and own liquor establishments.

The law has remained on the books unnoticed for years, serving as the enabling language for 18 year old bartenders. Recently, the Department of Consumer Protection has decided to interpret this permissive statute by creating a prohibition against 16 and 17 year olds from working as bussers, waitresses or cashiers in: restaurants, bowling alleys, amusement parks, colleges and universities, along with any other establishment that has a liquor permit.

It is difficult to comprehend that a Connecticut agency would take such a dramatic position against public policy, past practice and legislative intent. As a business owner, I can appreciate the challenges of hiring our youth. Employers work around school, social and athletic schedules. Many times places like bowling alleys and restaurants are an ideal stepping stone for youth employment because they can provide flexible work hours.

I certainly take issue and disagree with the Department's interpretation of C.G.S. 30-90a, but given their position, the legislature is facing a problem – the hope that these jobs are not foreclosed on our youth. I recommend that you not merely lower the age referenced in C.G.S. 30-90a from 18 to 16. This statute, as mentioned, serves as the enabling language for bartenders and I don't believe Connecticut wants 16 year olds serving alcohol.

Again, I appreciate you taking up this unfortunate issue, I would hope in the future, as a legislature; we can avoid bureaucrats making public policy by allowing businesses to request declaratory rulings from the Attorney General's Office when agency interpretations of statutory law conflict with long-standing practices.

Sincerely,



Vin Candelora
State Representative
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Serving North Branford, Durham, Guilford and Wallingford